

21st Theater Sustainment Command earns third straight Armywide honors for improving efficiency, saving money

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KAISERSLAUTERN, Germany -- The Lean Six Sigma program for U.S. Army Europe's 21st Theater Sustainment Command again received Department of the Army accolades for saving the Army and the American tax payers millions of dollars and discovering methods of conducting operations more efficiently.

For the third straight year, the 21st TSC won the Army's Lean Six Sigma Excellence Awards Program Organizational Deployment Award for the 2012 fiscal year.

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Also receiving the Army level LSS Project Team Award is the command's 266th Financial Management Support Center for improving the implementation and control of foreign language proficiency bonus pay, saving the Army more than \$5 million.

The LSS program is a flexible cost and waste elimination method used successfully in both private and public organizations to increase efficiency and enhance effectiveness within an organization.

According to the nomination narrative for the Organizational Deployment Award, the 21st TSC won for completing 28 LSS projects that are expected to produce \$16 million in validated financial benefits to the organization as well as multiple operational efficiency improvements.

"This award recognizes the command's dedication to continued self-improvement, first-class support, and our commitment to using our nation's resources in the most efficient manner possible," said Col. Michael Snyder, the 21st TSC's deputy commanding officer, and Dallas, Ore., native.

"It's definitely very prestigious; it's prestigious for our command to have won an award that recognizes our organization," said Ron Stanley, 21st TSC operations research analyst and a native of Tucson, Ariz. "It recognizes the command group on down across the whole command and (shows) the depth and breadth of the program."

"It's a team effort from all of the brigades and all of the people involved in the program," said Maj. Christopher Bachmann, the 21st TSC chief, Operations Research System Analysis section and a native of Windthorst, Texas. "It affirms to the people outside of the command that we do a lot of things right. We're also looking to improve the organization and improve the Army, and this award is proof that we're doing that."

When asked about the award for the 266th FMSC, Stanley said "This is the second year in a row that 266th FMSC has had a project recognized by the Department of the Army. (It) reflects the organization's commitment to Lean Six Sigma."

Bachmann added there are hundreds of LSS projects initiated in the Army every year. Of those, only two are given project level awards by the Army and the 266th FMSC has won one of those awards.

"All my team members are excited to be a part of this project, not only because it saved millions of taxpayers' dollars, but also that it made history by changing the way the FLPB process is operating," said Vladimir Koltsov, the project lead and a native of Harrisburg, Pa.

"We also achieved a better Soldiers' satisfaction with the process," added Koltsov, who is also the 266th FMSC chief of military pay review, debt management and special actions section. "Now the recipients of FLPB have trust in finance personnel to get it right the first time."

Lean Six Sigma projects carried out within an organization follow a defined sequence of steps and have quantified financial targets such as cost reduction and/or profit increase.

"It's important now, because if you look at the dwindling defense budget, it has gotten smaller," Bachmann said. "And this is all about finding efficiencies in your organization, whether it's simply an operational efficiency and we're doing something faster and better, or trying to find those financial benefits, especially now that we're trying to save money."

While saving money is an important aspect of the LSS program, it's also about improving efficiency through operational means.

"That's a large part of why you do (LSS) in an organization like the 21st TSC, it's not just about dollars," said Stanley. "Here in an operationally focused command, we find that a lot of our projects are really more about operational benefits and efficiencies that are achieved."

"LSS creates opportunities to make any organization better and more viable in the future," Snyder added. "Project outcomes usually result in shorter process times, fewer man hours, and tangible cost savings. Because it is a holistic process, it also cuts across several command functions creating enhanced interaction, teamwork, and collective solutions with broad buy-in."

Since it began implementing the LSS program in 2006, the 21st TSC has trained a total of 138 green belts and 19 black belts.

Green Belts are individuals who apply LSS to their daily work environments by driving improvements within their facility, department, or natural work group and black belts are process improvement leaders who work on large-scale and often cross- organizational process improvements.

About us: U.S. Army Europe is uniquely positioned to advance American strategic interests across Eurasia and has unparalleled capability to prevent conflict, shape the environment and, if necessary, win decisively. The relationships we build during more than 1000 theater security cooperation events in more than 40 countries each year lead directly to support for multinational contingency operations around the world, strengthen regional partnerships, and enhance global security.